UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

OPERATIC PERFORMANCES IN ENGLAND BEFORE HANDEL

BY

A. JOSEPH ARMSTRONG

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A THESIS

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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PREFACE

No field in English Literature has received less attention than that of the heroic drama, and inseparably connected with this is the so-called literary opera, for the composers who wrote the one, also wrote the other. I have chronicled the rise and progress of the English opera from 1656, the date of its initial performance, until the introduction in 1710 of Italian librettos by Handel and his co-workers. Little or nothing has been written on the consecutive history of the opera between those two dates. The works themselves are not easily available and for that reason I have given epitomes of the operas and I have collected many facts concerning this excrescence of literature. I have read every extant opera, many of which are to be found only in the library of the British Museum.

My indebtedness to the librarians of Havard and Columbia Colleges, of the University of Pennsylvania, of the Congressional Library and of the British Museum, I gratefully acknowledge.

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CHAPTER I

DEVELOPMENT OF OPERATIC FEATURES

This study deals chiefly with the early opera in its connection with English letters. Music has been considered only as it serves to give a more distinct and comprehensive view of the principal theme. This limitation is necessary because with a few exceptions the scores of operas composed before the time of Handel have been lost. The nature of the music therefore can only be surmised from incidental references to it, scattered throughout diaries, letters and other contemporary records.

The seventeenth century idea of opera differed materially from our own. The essentials of opera in Italy and France varied in important details from those of English opera so that a definition must be formulated covering the English conditions. An opera, it would seem, was a drama, either tragic or comic, which called to its aid in its presentation the sister art of music in the form of set songs, choruses and recitatives. Its subject was commonly romantic, and it employed like other romantic drama, the effectiveness of elaborate scenery, stage effects and costuming, setting more store on these accessories than did other plays. It differed from the masque in the subsidiary place which it gave to dancing and in the greater coherence of its plot. Though it suffered in its history certain changes in detail, its essential features lay in the fact that it was a musical drama.

Davenant was the first writer of English opera. But to him an opera was any dramatic performance with song, recitative, instrumental music and scenic accompaniment. Joseph Knight accounts thus for Davenant's usage of the term: "His reason for using the word seems to have been almost entirely commercial, without much consideration for fitness. It was necessary to hoodwink the Puritan police authorities in order to give the production, 'Long after he

had dismissed the music and produced regular tragedies, he adhered to the word opera, the use of which had enabled him to steer his bark in "ticklish" times.' " Knight seems a trifle too general in his assertions, for there were certainly operatic elements in the *Siege of Rhodes,* in *Sir Francis Drake* and in *The Spaniards in Peru.* Time and again moreover Davenant is referred to by Dryden, Langbaine, Dennis and others as the one who first introduced opera. As to his "adherence to the word long after he had dismissed the music," there is no record that a new English opera was played during Davenant's lifetime, after the earliest years of the Restoration period. His own operatic version of *Macbeth* was not presented until 1672, several years after his death. There would seem then to be no reason for his continuance of the use of the word. Instead of dismissing musical accompaniments, it is far more probable in conformity to the trend of the Restoration stage, that he favored the introduction of music into his dramas in increasing proportion. Even conceding that Davenant's purpose in his earlier performances was largely mercenary, his remodelled *Siege of Rhodes* may be held to have been influenced also by other considerations. It has evidences of a conscious striving for artistic expression and complexity of plot, and it certainly set an example for later operas.

Dryden, the author of several of the best English operas, has left his conception of the opera in the preface to *Albion and Albanius:* "An opera is a poetical tale of fiction represented by vocal and instrumental music adorned with scenes, machines and dancing. The supposed persons of this musical drama are generally supernatural, as gods and goddesses, and heroes, which at least are descended from them and are in due time to be adopted into their number." Dryden omitted to mention dialogue because that is common to other forms of drama and therefore not distinctive of opera.

Still another definition is that of Henry Purcell, the greatest musician of his age, and the collaborator with Dryden in *King Arthur.* In the preface of his *Dioclesian* he speaks of an opera as a "play of which music forms a

frequent, necessary and integral part, but of which the dialogue is spoken." He further explains music as symphonies, songs and recitatives. Purcell contended, so it seems, that the dramatic dialogue should be declaimed and that only certain distinctively operatic accompaniments should be sung. This attitude was directly at variance with Italian practice and with Dryden's theory, but it dominated operatic technique until the advent of Italian opera under Handel. From that time English opera has been deeply indebted to Italian sources.

Davenant was also the first to make over Elizabethan plays for operatic presentation. In refitting the older dramas important changes were made, among which were the introduction into the text of bright, clever songs with melodious accompaniments, the elimination as far as possible of complexity of plot, the reduction of the actual number of lines of the text, and finally the introduction of supernatural characters. To accomplish this often characters or entire scenes were omitted. Supernatural beings, gods, fairies, witches offered serious hindrance in their introduction, to obviate which short masques, or masque-like scenes, were inserted between the acts. Songs and instrumental music were used as "entre-acts." Recitative was employed, but to what extent cannot with certainty be determined. Unquestionably some of these operas were recited to music, but it is doubtful if any part of the original drama was so delivered. The literary purveyors showed excellent taste in the selection of the Elizabethan plays to be adapted to operatic purposes, e. g., *The Tempest, Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Island Princess,* and the *Prophetess.* Fletcher has suffered less at their hands than has Shakspere, due doubtless to the fact that Shakspere's redactors were men of great boldness.

It has usually been considered that the heroic drama and the opera made their appearance in English literature simultaneously in *The Siege of Rhodes.* No literary species, however, springs into existence full grown as did Pallas from the head of Jove. It is now generally conceded that

the germ of the heroic play is found in Fletcher, that it was fostered by Carlell and Killigrew before Davenant and Dryden took it under their protecting care. In Davenant the Fletcherian element is still visible, but in Dryden and his successors it has been so modified and distorted as to require careful and painstaking research in order to discover its existence. The opera on the other hand grew slowly, so much so that its growth may even be said to have been stunted. Elaborate and varied scenery was not required for the heroic play as it was for the opera, making it easier and less expensive to stage a heroic play. The price of admission was less. Opera furnished variety and served to attract because of its novelty.

The interest in the heroic play was due in part, doubtless, to the popularity of the French romances of Scuderi and Calprenede with which the king and the court idled away their time. Thus at the playhouse they found a counterpart to their interests at home. Unnatural and extravagant, absurd and conventional as were both plays and romances, they appealed to the whim of the age. But their artificiality made their popularity of necessity short-lived. After 1680 interest in the heroic drama waned rapidly while that in the opera increased until the end of the century.

Opera and the contemporary drama managed plots, characters and themes in much the same way, the difference being one of naturalness and intensity in elaboration. The plots of the various serious operas are as a rule borrowed from other literature and are reworked to suit the purpose in hand. Such were *Circe, State of Innocence, King Arthur* and *Rinaldo and Armida.* In other instances the plots seem to be original, taken from historical sources; such were all of Davenant's operas, *Albion and Albanius* and others. The plots of the comic operas are foolish and far-fetched, and have been responsible to a great degree for the opprobrium which has been indiscriminately heaped upon the opera. The serious operas are as well worthy of study as the dramas of the period.

The characters of the opera do not differ greatly from

those of the drama in general. Perchance, as in the case of *King Arthur*, they are caught in the meshes of a fairly complicated situation, and instead of facing the inevitable, they escape by magic. In general, however, they are quite as natural as those of the contemporary heroic drama. They took their growth from characters such as those of the romantic drama of *Philaster* and developed along kindred lines. The supernatural dramatis personae are as a rule the stock characters of the masque. This is to be expected, as in many operas masques have been inserted, but in opera these characters have an individuality which makes them more realistic than they are in the masque. The "common people" seldom find place in the opera. When they are admitted, they are usually in the Arcadian guise of shepherds.

The principal themes of the heroic drama of Dryden and his followers are love, honor, ambition, and war. In the serious opera these themes, though present, are treated in the romantic spirit of the earliest heroic play. The French romance, on the contrary, dictates the policy of the late heroic drama. Ranting in *Siege of Rhodes* or *Philaster* is mild compared with that of the *Siege of Granada*, or *Tyrannic Love*. *Circe*, the second extant original English opera, acted after the Restoration, has the heroic elements but not in an intrusive manner.

In Dryden, Orrery and others, war is the controlling element and love is almost without exception heroic love. In *Circe*, on the contrary, and the same is true of the opera in general, war plays a minor part. The real interest lies elsewhere. Orestes, the hero, willingly renounces his warlike ambitions in order to gratify his love for Circe. Circe and Orestes love and both yield and with them Platonic love of the heroic type finds no place. What could be more natural than the result? It is the old story which has ever played its part in the drama of life and of fiction.

Dryden's *King Arthur* affords another example. It has a refinement of characterization and naturalness in the development of the plot different from the heroic plays of the same author. Arthur's tenderness for Emmeline strikes a

sympathetic chord that vibrates in undertones of love and admiration. Even the supernatural element in this play possesses an air of possibility and maintains the interest throughout. War serves only as a frame to encase an exquisite picture of almost Arcadian simplicity and beauty.

Political and historical themes, while proper subjects for drama, require subtlety in their argumentative style which should exclude them from opera. Dryden, however, among his operas has furnished in *Albion and Albanius* a political satire, which he strove to conceal in allegory.

The themes of the comic operas are as various as they are idle. Wild, weird, extravagant situations and subjects affording occasions for the use of strange and new machines characterize these worthless things. The imaginative element in the opera is seen in the mechanical inventions. It was in them that the appeal to the public lay. The fact that such extravagance was resorted to, shows that the public was pleased with it and paid for it. Such elements cannot be considered a laudable advance from the point of view of the imagination. In the theatre-goers, they marked degeneration from the Elizabethan times; in the playwright, they showed that inventiveness had been transferred from intellectual to mechanical processes. Light airy nothings and strange, fantastical machines resulted from their labor. On the mechanician alone, a demand was made for the best skill of his art, but a mechanician is hardly a literary artist.

The music of the opera consisted of vocal and instrumental parts. In some instances all of the music was the work of one composer, whereas the libretto frequently showed composite authorship. Singing of songs used by Davenant in his opera became also a feature in the heroic plays of Dryden and other writers of the period. Later, songs without any connection with the plays were rendered during the intermissions. Many of these songs were in foreign languages, among which the Italian was especially noticeable. In an advertisement of the *Recruiting Officer* it is petitioned to have Mrs. Tofts sing in Italian. Vocal and instrumental music was used in such profusion in Dryden's *Indian*

Queen, Lee's *Theodosius* and Stapleton's *Stepmother,* that they have at times been spoken of as operas.

The music of Davenant's opera seems to have been well-sung and well-received. No scores exist, but from the fact that the score for the *Siege of Rhodes* was written by the most excellent musicians of the day, it is reasonable to conjecture that the music was in keeping with the reputation of the composers. The authors of the other pre-Restoration operatic scores are unknown. Lock is alleged to have prepared the score for *Macbeth.* He also furnished music for *The Tempest* and *Psyche.* For the latter, Draghi wrote the overture and act-tunes. John Banister composed the original music for *Circe,* but this was replaced with a score by Purcell. For *Albion and Albanius,* Grabu wrote the music, while for the remaining operas until 1695 with an occasional exception, the scores came from the master hand of Purcell. From his death until 1705 the composers were Englishmen, often of little talent, among whom may be mentioned Daniel Purcell, Jeremy Clark, John Eccles and G. Finger. After 1705 the scores of great Italian masters were adapted to English needs and these sometimes have original music of such excellence interspersed that it is at times almost impossible to distinguish the original from the borrowed music.

No scores of the foreign operas of Cambert and Draghi are extant. Of the former it was said that his operas were not to the taste of the people, while of the latter we have the opinion of the gossipy Pepys. One of the annoyances with which the librettists had to contend was alterations made in their work by the musicians. Dryden speaks very feelingly in the preface to *Albion and Albanius,* complaining that so much has been changed as to almost ruin his lines. Shadwell is outspoken in his denunciation of the way in which *Psyche* has been marred. On the contrary, in the preface to *King Arthur,* Dryden, in spite of some reservations, makes handsome acknowledgment of Purcell's sympathetic collaboration.

Both in opera and in drama considerable applause was

won by the singers and many references remain showing the pleasure which these singers furnished Charles II. and the questionable nature of his reward. It is safe to surmise that the singers were likewise remarkable for cleverness in their acting and for the attractiveness of their personality. Their vocal powers were those of untrained voices, in all probability naturally sweet. A few sentences from Hawkins throw light upon the conditions of the vocal music: "As Purcell is chiefly celebrated for his vocal compositions, it may perhaps be conceived that in the original performances of them they derive considerable advantages and that the singers, like the actors of that day, had abilities far superior to those of the present; but this, as far as inquiry has traced, is not true. Before the introduction of Italian opera into England, the use of the vocal organs was but little understood, and as to what is called a fine manner the best singers were strangers to it and to those numberless graces and elegances in singing now so familiar to us; for which reason it is we see in many of Purcell's songs the graces written at length and made a part of the composition." Such was the condition in general prior to 1700, after which time opera singers were well trained. It is significant that of all those who appeared before the end of the seventeenth century, scarcely one is considered of sufficient importance to merit a place in dictionaries or enclyclopedias of musicians. Cibber gives additional light on the position of singers in the penultimate decade of the century when he states: "Plays were neglected, actors were held cheap and slightly dressed, while singers and dancers were better paid and embroidered. These measures, of course, created murmuring on one side and contempt on the other."

Henry Purcell, England's greatest musical genius (according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Music*), deserves more than a passing notice. He received his first inspiration as a choir boy under Dr. Cook, one of the composers of *The Siege of Rhodes*. Later he became a pupil successively of Humfrey and Blow. And before his eighteenth year he had written incidental music for plays among which were

Epsom Wells, Arung Zebe and *The Libertine.* The next four years he wrote the music for *Abdelazor, Timon of Athens, The Virtuous Wife, Theodosius,* and later for *Dido and Aeneas,* his first complete opera. From 1686 to 1695 Purcell was prolific in his writing and doing some of his most important work in the songs of *Amphytryon, Massacre of Paris* and *Indian Queen.* He is also found in collaboration with Dryden, Betterton, Durfey and other adapters of opera. In 1690 he furnished the music for *Dioclesian* and in 1691 for *King Arthur.* A paragraph from the *Oxford History of Music* summarizes concisely Purcell's accomplishments: "Purcell's work covers more than that of any other composer of the century. He attempted every branch of art then known and even developed some which cannot be said to have been known until he mastered them; and there was no department in which he did not excel. He easily learned the secrets of his predecessors and profited from them. Though in some respects he seems to have more natural kinship with Monteverde than with any other composer, he was equally master of instrumental style of the French opera, the style of the Italian sonata writer and the methods of dealing with the chorus which had been Carissimi's peculiar glory. Perhaps no composer except Schubert has ever had a readier fund of melody; and it always rings true and characteristic of the country to which he belongs."

Our treatment of the opera has thus far omitted any reference to its constituent elements in their derivation from the past. The sources of Davenant's earlier productions have been variously ascribed and we may feel sure they were as diversified and unselected as a purpose almost wholly commercial could make them. It is obvious that a man like Davenant would not scruple to appropriate whatever material, foreign or domestic, answered his purpose. He was, of course, familiar with the dramatic technique of English plays and with the demands of contemporary stagecraft. In his early manhood he had written plays and during the reign of the first Charles his masques had been

presented at court, some of them having been staged by Inigo Jones, that master of stagecraft. Davenant's *Temple of Love,* given at Whitehall, was one of the most elaborate masques for invention and variety of scene ever given in England. His intimate association with the theatres before the Commonwealth is shown by the fact that he coached Betterton and others in roles as he had seen them played by earlier actors.

Davenant's English sources for opera were two, the masque and the romantic drama. From the first he derived the sumptuous use of scenery, the introduction of women on the stage, the musical element, the employment of the supernatural, and the use of dancers. The romantic drama furnished the model for plot, character and diction. Davenant took what he needed from the masque and drama, and mixing it with his own invention derived a new species of drama more nearly suited to the spirit of the time. Unpretentiousness of display in these productions, however, was necessary to avoid offending the authorities. The trappings and decorations must have been inexpensive compared with the almost fabulous cost of the masque given under the earlier Stuarts.

It has been frequently maintained that Davenant was influenced by what he saw in France in his introduction of stage scenery, but this statement is hardly borne out by facts. Let us take a brief survey of the opera in France. Cardinal Mazarin fostered court theatricals for the gratification of Anne of Austria. For this purpose he employed some Italian performers to give, partly in declamation and partly in song, *La Fesla teatrale della finta Pazza,* the libretto of which was written by Jacques Torelli, a Venetian architect with literary and theatrical aspirations. The score was by Giulio Strozzi. It was presented at the Petit Luxembourg, December 14, 1645. The performance was a success because of its scenic effectiveness and the beautiful singing of Margareta Bertalozzi, but the innovation of Italian recitative does not appear to have created an equally favorable impression. Mad. de Motteville speaks thus of

these Italian operas: "Those who are judges think very highly of the Italians. For my part, I find the length of the performance takes largely away from the pleasure, and that verses repeated in a simple manner represent conversation more naturally and touch the heart more deeply than the singing pleases the ears." Again: "On Shrove Tuesday (1646) the queen had a performance of one of her musical comedies in the small hall of the Palais Royal. We were only twenty or thirty persons in the place and we thought we should die of cold and ennui." A few years later, at Mazarin's request, Corneille wrote *Andromede* to utilize the scenes prepared for tht Italian productions. Dibdin says of this: "It would be pitiful and unworthy to describe the particulars of that puppet show through which the public were now to admire the brilliant talents of the great Corneille. One principal object of admiration was a living pegasus flying in a way so peculiar that he sprung into the air and seemed lost in the clouds. The poor horse it seemed was kept without food until he was almost starved, and in that condition fastened in the flies to a cord with pullies so constructed that by a counterpoise, his own weight could carry him to the other side of the stage. When it was proper time for this pegasus to exhibit, a man on the other side, so concealed as not to be seen by his audience, held in sight of the famished animal a sieve of oats. The animal instantly began neighing and pawing; and when he had been sufficiently irritated, the rope that had restrained him was loosened and the effort threw him into the air until he arrived at his stable in the clouds where he was recompensed by a good supper for his dexterity." Davenant, however, had left France before the performance of this production.

As early as 1647, the Abbe Perrin (described as a "hanger-on of Gaston d'Orleans") recognized the possibilities of Italian opera for the French, but he saw also the necessity of adapting it in certain particulars to the French taste. The result of his study is seen in the earliest French opera which included a much greater variety of sources of entertainment while opportunities for mere vocalization

were not unduly prominent. Thus, from its incipiency, French opera shows the grafting of a peculiarly native growth upon an Italian stock. With the assistance of Cambert, Perrin worked out an operatic production called *La Pastorale premiere comedie francaise en musique.* It was given without scenic advantages with extraordinary applause at the Chateau d'Issy. So great was the interest aroused that Louis XIV commanded its presentation at Chateau de Vincennes. This is usually considered the first French opera and was given privately three years after the first public performance of *The Siege of Rhodes.* As in the case of this last named work, the libretto exists but the score has been lost. It seems remarkable that these successes should have been unfollowed. To be sure, *Ariane, ou le marriage de Bacchus,* by the same authors, was in rehearsal at Issy when Mazarin died (1661), but it was not publicly acted until 1669. It is thus the first French opera publicly presented on the French stage and it was given thirteen years after the first performance of *The Siege of Rhodes.* It is also highly significant that when in 1669 Cambert and Perrin petitioned Louis XIV for the privilege of establishing opera in France, they requested to be allowed to give it as it was written in Italy, Germany and England.

Recitative was another feature of Davenant's operas, although it had been used before as its mention (in 1617) in Johnson's masques, *Lord Hay's Entertainment for Baron de Tour,* and *Vision of Delight,* goes to prove. Nor is it certain that this musical recitation of words may not have been quite common to the Jacobean masque. Recitative was, however, likewise a feature both of French and Italian opera and while it does not seem necessary to refer its derivation in Davenant's case to these foreign influences, they may have had their effect either directly or through masques such as those mentioned above.

The introduction into opera of instrumental music between the acts and the intermixture of the more serious parts with songs and lighter lyrics had an English foundation, dating from the beginning of the drama in England.

Lyrics were popularly used in the earliest Elizabethan plays. In the masque, the use of the music was more or less organic and elaborate; in the plays, it was brief and incidental; in the opera it was theoretically an integral part of the organism. But for most operas composed before the beginning of the eighteenth century, the musical parts of one opera might readily have been inserted in any other opera, so slight was the relation between the dramatic and operatic parts. In the masque there was choral singing which in later operas became an important element, often being planned with considerable skill. In this respect, these later operas showed more closely their indebtedness to the masque.

The assignment of female parts to women was a significant element in the opera. Prior to 1656, English women had rarely (if ever) appeared on the public stage. They had taken important parts in the masque, although never a speaking part. There had been instances when the queen and the princesses of the blood royal had participated in these entertainments. It required but a suggestion to perceive that if the nobility enjoyed the dancing and posing of ladies in the masque, a similar exhibition in public performances would become generally popular. One wonders that the incongruity of allowing men to impersonate women on the stage had not long before appealed to the English sense of humor. Women appeared on the stage in other countries, which fact may have suggested to Davenant the idea of ascertaining the English attitude toward this by introducing Mrs. Coleman in the *Siege of Rhodes*. It is generally conceded (Aubrey to the contrary) that *The Siege of Rhodes* in two parts, having several female roles, was not presented until 1661. Soon after the Restoration, however, women appeared frequently in the legitimate drama until by degrees their parts were no longer acted by men.

The dances which became popular with the opera of the Restoration period may owe somewhat to the French taste of the Stuart monarch, for at the time of his residence at the French court the ballet was a favorite amusement. But

the bias of the king could not have influenced the productions of the politic Davenant during the Commonwealth. Dancing was the soul of the masque, just as the masque in its properly confined usage was the frame of a dance or ball. Inasmuch as in Davenant's opera, dancing must have been after an approved English fashion, it must of necessity have been suggested by the masque. The comic antimasque also served to establish the connection between the dancing in the opera and that in the masque. The dancers in these antimasques were invariably actors from the theatres. It seems very reasonable that these people who could interest royalty and nobility with their dancing, would also make it a part of their stock in trade to increase the patronage and popularity of the playhouse. In availing himself of the dance for his opera, Davenant thus simply appropriated a very familiar device.

In the earlier pages of this study the discussion of plot, characters and diction show that these operatic elements were drawn from the romantic drama of which Fletcher's *Philaster* may be considered a fair representative. In many respects Davenant's operas are little more than the average romantic drama of pre-Restoration times with musical accompaniments. They are not evidences of the decadent extremes of their immediate predecessors nor the wild excesses of their successors. The realistic characterization of romantic drama is seen in the serious opera before *Arsinoe,* after which there could hardly be said to be any characterization at all in the opera. The heroic and mythological characters are merely those of the masque transformed under Fletcherian influence. The metaphorical and delicately extravagant romantic language of the *Siege of Rhodes* indicates another indebtedness to Fletcher's drama. The diction is neither so rich nor so striking as that of the Elizabethan but it also lacks the stilted, conventionel language of the later, heroic play.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY BEGINNINGS OF OPERA

The political and social disorders which disturbed England during the period of Puritan domination produced conditions directly antagonistic to the production of public amusements of any form. Even before the execution of King Charles the theatre had been strenuously opposed by the Puritans and denounced as a menace to morality. In consequence injunctions followed, curtailing their privileges, and in 1647 an ordinance was passed, closing the playhouses and forbidding all kinds of theatrical presentations. Such extreme measures begot reaction. Clandestine performances, slenderly patronized, were given. Because of this ban upon harmless amusements many fair-minded citizens were aroused against the Puritans and welcomed anything which might react against the existing conditions. With an act on the statutes against theatres, actors and spectators, it is manifest that there could be no hope of reviving the legitimate drama, unless indeed the real issues were disguised. Sir William Davenant, a man noted alike for his shrewdness and enterprise, formerly prominent both as a playwright and as a theatre manager, made capital out of the general discontent and secured permission from Cromwell to present a new kind of entertainment which he styled opera. In giving his consent to the performances of Davenant, Cromwell must have realized that the people were chafing under the iron-clad restraint of Puritan rule, and politician that he was, he realized that in yielding he was also strengthening his power over the people. Whatever his ulterior reasons, he granted permission to Davenant to present operas, and ever since opera has been performed intermittently in England, sometimes attaining great popularity; at other times seeming to disappear entirely.

Armed with the power of the law, Davenant presented

in the back part of Rutland House in Charterhouse Yard on May the twenty-first, 1656, his first performance. The title page of this piece reads as follows: *"The first day's entertainment at Rutland House, by declamations and musick, after the manner of the antients.* By Sir W. D., London: Printed by J. M. for H. Herringham, and sold at his shop at the Anchor in the New Exchange in the Lower Walk 1657, 8 vo."

In its prologue this piece is called an opera. Productions like it could never have gained a lasting hold upon any people, and especially upon a people in whose minds lingered traditions of the great Elizabethan drama. Indeed its long argumentative dialogues could hardly have attracted even a public weary of the religious restraints of the time. It is possible that Davenant considered he might win the confidence of the authorities by presenting something of a sombre, harmless nature before he essayed an ambitious entertainment. Whatever his reasons, the performance was duly given. The interest of the public was attested by the presence of an audience of a hundred and fifty people, although provision had been made for four hundred. As there is no record that this piece was ever repeated, it is highly probable that one performance served Davenant's purpose and satisfied the curiosity of the audience. The only resemblance of the *First Day's Entertainment* to opera is that it furnished a medium for the presentation of a play accompanied by music. The remarks in the *Biographia Dramatica* are interesting: "This being an introductory piece, it required all the author's wit to make it answer different intentions; for first it was to be so pleasing as to gain applause; and next it was to be so remote from the very appearance of a play as not to give any offence to that pretended sanctity which was then in fashion. It began with music; then followed a prologue in which the author banters the oddity of his own performance."

The Entertainment is written in prose with the exception of the prologue, the epilogue and two songs; the discussions are long and tedious, but seem to indicate that the author

was already maturing his plans for something more nearly operatic. After a flourish of music, the curtains are drawn and the prologue enters. In the course of his remarks, he mentions several important features of the performance which throw light on the local condition under which this entertainment was given. He says:

"But though you cannot front our cupboard scene,
Nor sit so eas'ly as to stretch and lean,
Yet you are so divided and so plac'd
That half are freely by the other fac'd;
And we are shrewdly jealous that you come
Not merely to hear us, or to see the room,
But rather meet here to be met, I mean
Each would see all, and would of all be seen,
Which we but guess, respectfully to show
Your worthy selves, not we of you.
Think this your passage, and the narrow way
To our Elysian field the opera."

Then the curtains are closed. After a "concert" of instrumental music, adapted to the sullen disposition of Diogenes, the curtains are again opened and seated on two gilded "rostras" appear Diogenes and Aristotle in costumes befitting their country and professions. A long dissertation by the cynic against opera is followed by a "concert of music, befitting the pleasant disposition of Aristophanes," who, of course, destroys the arguments advanced by Diogenes. Again the company is entertained by vocal and instrumental music. This song being ended, another "concert" after the French composition is heard. When the curtains are again opened, there appear "in the rostras sitting, a Parisian and a Londoner, in the livery of their respective cities, who declaim concerning the pre-eminence of Paris and London." After the Parisian's speech there follows a "concert of music imitating the Waits of London." Then the Londoner answers, proving as was eminently proper under the circumstances, the superiority of his city. This discourse is followed by more instrumental music and a song proclaiming London's superiority over Paris. Then the

speaker of the prologue appears and having rendered his lines is followed by a flourish of loud music. The curtain is now closed for the last time and the entertainment is at an end. Surely the beginnings of opera in England were insignificant.

Curiously enough Antony Wood calls this entertainment the first Italian opera performed in England. He suggests the Protector's reason for allowing it in these words: "Though Oliver Cromwell had now prohibited all other theatrical representations, he allowed of this because, being in an unknown language, it could not corrupt the morals of the people." Concerning which E. Sutherland Edwards in his *Lyrical Drama* aptly remarks that Wood must have supposed Davenant's performance to have been in the Italian tongue, or else must have regarded music as an unknown language and therefore unintelligible!

After a few months Davenant sought the patronage of the public with an entertainment vastly superior to *The First Day's Entertainment at Rutland House.* It was an opera called *The Siege of Rhodes,* and was given at Rutland House in 1656. It was presented with shifting of scenes. The libretto was rendered in recitative, air, and by chorus. The composers of the music were Henry Lawes, who later composed the music for Milton's *Comus,* Captain Henry Cook and Matthew Lock. The cast included Gregory Thorndell, Henry Cook, Edward Coleman and wife, Matthew Lock, John Harding, Henry Purcell, the father of the great musician of the same name. This Mrs. Coleman is the first English woman recorded as acting upon a public stage. She played the part of Ianthe. There is no record of the frequency with which this entertainment was given, but the general conditions and the fact that it was subsequently enlarged justify the conclusion that it was well received. The first part (in 1661 we have a second part) had seven characters in five entries. As first presented it lacked the important character of Roxolana. The story centers itself about the siege of Rhodes and will be told when that Restoration play is treated.

Two years later Davenant brought out his next operatic performance which may be more fittingly styled an introduction to later opera. Its title page reads: *"The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru.* Exprest by instrumentall and vocall musick, and by the art of perspective in scenes. Represented daily at the Cockpit in Drury Lane, at three afternoon punctually." It was presented in 1658 and printed the same year. To the end of the first edition was appended this note: "Notwithstanding the great expense necessary to scenes and other ornaments in this entertainment, there is good provision made for a shilling." Already the increased expenditure incurred in staging opera was demanding serious consideration of the business end of the enterprise.

Throughout the piece a priest, acting as an interpreter of the dumb shows, is the only speaker. Each speech, followed by a song, ends in a dance, joyous or mournful as occasion demands. Nothing is said about recitative and it is probable that the leader spoke his part.

The story tells of Spanish interference and cruelty in Peru, and closes with the suggestion that the English will come to assist the down-trodden natives. The play was hardly fit for presentation. Among the stage directions is one for this gruesome scene: "Two Spaniards are discovered—the one turning a spit, whilst the other is basting an Indian prince, which is roasted at an artificial fire."

Tropical scenery used in abundance tended to give the opera the effect of a gorgeous spectacular show. The first "prospect is made through a wood, differing from those of European climates by representing of coco-trees, pines and palmetos; and on the boughs of other trees are seen monkies, apes and parrots; and, at farther distance, vallies of sugar-canes." (Stage Directions)

The fact that this opera was presented daily attests its popularity. In December, 1658, *The Public Intelligencer* contained notice that the court had ordered an investigation of opera. Their report is not known but it may be considered not unfavorable inasmuch as Davenant presented a new opera in the year following.

The last pre-Restoration opera of which we have record is *"The History of Sir Francis Drake,"* represented daily at the Cockpit. The decorations were elaborate as may be seen in an examination of the stage directions. It is probable that the greater part of the text was sung in recitative. The date assigned is early in 1659. Evelyn under May 5, 1659, has the following comment: "I went to visit my brother in London and next day to see a new opera after ye Italian way in recitative music and sceanes, much inferior to ye Italian composure and magnificence; but it was prodigious in a time of such publig consternation such vanity should be kept up or permitted." (Evelyn felt that the recent death of Cromwell should have been more fittingly recognized.)

The story of this opera is taken partly from incidents in the travels of Drake. The action takes place in Panama, although "an antick shield" with Peru written on it greets the spectator at the rising of the curtain. Drake extends a helping hand to the Symerrons, a Moorish people in bondage to the Peruvians. The most exciting scene shows a bride bound to a tree. Her hair is "dishevel'd" and she is complaining loudly. Drake, of course, rescues her and censures severely the Symerrons for their lack of courtesy to a "lady." They reply that they are simply doing what the Spaniards had taught them, but promise never to do it again. This opera, like *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru,* was later used by Davenant as a part of his medley, *The Playhouse to Be Let.*

With the Restoration of the Stuarts the drama revived, and with it the opera took a new lease of life. Charles II in his long exile had acquired French tastes, and these swayed the English court. The opera, however, seems not to have been affected by the change. Until 1672, so far as records are preserved, one English opera, repeatedly given, held the stage.

It is not improbable that other operas, the names of which are lost, were acted. Under August 2, 1664, Pepys records a conversation in which Killigrew states that he is going to

set up a "Nursery" where, among other things, he is going to present four operas "in a year, to act six weeks at a time." The best scenes, the best music and "everything as magnificent as is in Christendome" were to characterize these performances. For the execution of these designs, Pepys adds, he "hath sent for voices and painters and other persons from Italy."

The Siege of Rhodes is the first opera given after the Restoration of whose performance we have satisfactory evidence. This work, which is in two parts, consists of the early opera of that name greatly enlarged and revised, and a second part which employs the same characters with some new ones introduced. It was presented the latter part of June, 1661, with a cast of rising celebrities, among whom were Betterton, Harris, Lilliston, Blagden, Mrs. Davenport and Mrs. Saunderson. According to Downes it was excellently performed for twelve days without interruption and received great applause.

For the next few years this opera was quite popular and was frequently revived. It was printed in quarto in 1663 and in 1670, and was included in the folio edition of Davenant's Works in 1672. Pepys speaks often of reading this opera and on several occasions declares it is the best play ever written. His opinion may be taken as a fair index of his age.

There is no record of the composers of the music for the second part, but in all likelihood as the same musicians who set the first part were still living, it was prepared by them. Pepys, under the date of January 22, 1666-1667, speaks of the delight he has in the prospect of securing the music of *The Siege of Rhodes.*

The plot of this opera is in brief: The Christians at Rhodes are besieged by the Mussulmen under Solymon the Magnificent. On the island conditions, already serious, are everyday becoming more so. Ianthe, the wife of Alphonso, a duke of great power and renown, eager to help the city, seeks Solymon. The latter treats her with marked courtesy and allows her to return home. Ianthe has won the love

of the people but has aroused the jealousy of her husband. Alphonso determines to continue resistance to the sultan. Eventually the resources of Rhodes fail and the people cry for Ianthe to go again to Solymon. She goes, is well received and is sent to the tent of Roxolana, Solymon's wife. The sultana becomes jealous and decides to kill Ianthe as she sleeps, but changes her mind. When Ianthe awakes she instantly wins Roxolana's favor. Meanwhile, as Ianthe does not return, Alphonso's jealous fear incites him to an unsuccessful attack upon the sultan's quarters, during which he is captured. Solymon gives him to Roxolana, who unites him to Ianthe. Then Solymon promises Ianthe her request for Rhodes and so everything ends happily.

CHAPTER III

RESTORATION OPERA

Colley Cibber says that the only two theatrical companies of the time were prosperous for some years, till their variety of plays began to be exhausted when, of course, the better actors, who seem to have been in the Kings' company, could not fail to draw the greater audiences. And he adds that the Duke's, i. e., Davenant's company, introduced a new species of plays called operas in order to make head against their rivals. So we find at the Duke's Theatre in 1672 was given Shakspere's *Macbeth,* altered by Davenant, "being drest in all it's finery as new cloath's, new scenes, machines, as flying for the witches; with all the singing and dancing in it; the first compos'd by Mr. Lock, the other by Mr. Channell and Mr. Joseph Priest; it being all excellently perform'd, being in the nature of an opera, it recompenc'd double the expence; it proves still a lasting play." Its popularity is manifest by the fact that it was printed in quarto in 1674, 1687, 1695 and 1710. The cast included Betterton, Harris, Smith, Lee, Mrs. Betterton and Mrs. Long, all well-known actors at the time. On December 27, 1707, at the Haymarket, the opera was revived with Betterton, Wilkes, Mills, Keen, Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Rogers in the leading roles, and still other revivals are recorded for 1711, 1717, 1723 and 1738.

In preparing the play for operatic production, Davenant made some bold changes. Stevens goes so far as to say "almost every original beauty is either awkwardly disguised or arbitrarily omitted." Genest complains of the omission of some fine speeches and the introduction of a considerable quantity of "insipid stuff." Added to this there are hardly six lines together in which some "useless and wanton change" has not been made.

Davenant is indebted to Middleton's *Witches* for the

names of his witches and for "a considerable part of the chorusses." He supposes that Macbeth communicated to his lady the prophecy of the witches in two separate letters, and in this way he introduces a new scene between Lady Macbeth and her guest. Another important variation consists in lengthening the roles of Macduff and his wife. Lady Macbeth complains that the ghost of Duncan haunts her continually. She tries to prevail upon her husband to relinquish the crown, and in the fifth act her last two speeches are "most injudiciously omitted," while what passes between Macbeth and the doctor is "shamefully mutilated."

The musical pieces of *Macbeth* have maintained their popularity longer than those of any other dramatic composition. For rude and wild excellence, according to Burney, they cannot be surpassed. Their authorship is still undiscovered. It has been claimed for Locke, Purcell and Richard Leveridge.

So successful was this adaptation of *Macbeth* that in the following year (1673) there appeared *The Tempest, or the Inchanted Island,* "made into an opera by Mr. Shadwell, having all new in it; as scenes, machines; particularly one scene painted with myriads of 'Ariel' spirits; and another flying away, with a table, furnisht out with fruits, sweet meats and all sorts of viands; just when the Duke Trinculo and his companions were going to dinner; all was perform'd in it so admirably well, that not any succeeding opera got more money." This was the Dryden-Davenant *Tempest* played in 1667, adapted to operatic presentation. The music was the work of Humphrey, Lock and Banister.

Many changes were made. Not content with Caliban and Miranda, Sycorax, a sister monster, and Dorinda, a second daughter to Prospero, have been introduced. Trinculo is turned into a boatswain, and speaks a good deal of what belongs to Stephano. Two sailors are added. Hippolito's cure is effected by anointing Ferdinand's sword with weapon salve.

Dr. Furness in his *Variorum Tempest* says: "As a com-

prehensive commentary thereon, it is interesting to note that the additions to the original, on which Davenant and Dryden plumed themselves are wholesale plagiarisms from Calderon's play, written twenty years earlier, so says Herman Grimm *(Funfzehn Essays* 1875, p. 206), who also says, with humor, that such is the quality of these additions that the two poets laureate might well have contended for the honour of having contributed the smaller share."

The managers of the rival theatre, incited by jealousy at the successes of these operatic performances, brought out shortly after the appearance of *The Tempest* a burlesque upon it written by Duffet and called *The Mock Tempest, or The Enchanted Castle.* The characters are parodies on those of the operatic *Tempest* and are vulgar and forbidding as is also the language. Miranda and Dorinda are little better than wantons and their chatter is uninteresting and coarse. Foul insinuations are made against the Quakers, by one Quakero, which is only another of the many disgusting features. It is impossible to outline the story inasmuch as it would require the introduction of scenes thoroughly repulsive. The popularity of these presentations, however, was much too great to be killed by burlesques, and in February, 1673-1674 the long expected opera *Psyche* "came forth in all her ornaments; new scenes, new machines, new cloaths, new French dances. This opera was splendidly set out, especially in scenes; the charge of which amounted to above 800 pounds. It had a continuance of performance about 8 days together; it prov'd very beneficial to the company; yet *The Tempest* got them more money." (Downes) Langbaine also bears testimony to its reception: "How much this opera takes, everybody that is acquainted with the theatre knows; and with reason, since the greatest masters in vocal musick, dancing, and painting, were concerned in it." The only record of its renewal is for Mills' benefit at Dorset Garden on June 10, 1704. Then the bills say "not acted for 6 years." It is probable therefore that it was given at other times for which we have not dates.

Psyche closely follows Moliere's play of the same title

which had been given operatic settings in France by Quinault and Lulli, and had been presented in 1672 in Paris. This is the only English opera that shows direct indebtedness to the French so that the discussion of French influence on English opera may be practically ignored.

The score of *Psyche* was composed by Lock and was published with the libretto in 1675, being probably the first English opera whose score and libretto were published together. The act tunes and entries written by Draghi, the great Italian master of music, however, were not included. The story of *Psyche* is founded on the well-known tale of *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius and in brief is as follows: Psyche, the attractive daughter of Theander, is envied by her sisters, Aglaura and Cydippe, who resent her popularity among the eligible princes. Psyche, however, does not care for her suitors and only consents to marriage at the command of the oracle of Apollo, which assigns her to an awful fate. She is to be cast on the desert rock, there to be wedded to the poisonous serpent which lives there. The envious sisters are delighted and Psyche is resigned. She is cast upon the island and after a short interval she is embraced not by a serpent but by a god whose identity is concealed from her. All her environment is glorious. With a touch of human frailty she asks that her sisters be allowed to visit her, and they are transported to the place by magic. With augmented envy, they try to destroy her. They arouse in her a curiosity to learn the name of her god-lover. When Cupid, for he was the lover, next joins her, Psyche begs him to tell her his name. All efforts to dissuade her prove futile. When she is told all her happiness vanishes and she is again cast on a desert island, her sisters rejoicing in her downfall. In despair Psyche tries ineffectually to drown herself. Eventually all turns out happily and she is reunited to Cupid. The sisters are sent to punishment while Polynices and Nicanor, two suitors, kill themselves for love of Psyche.

With regard to the play Genest says: "Moliere's *Psyche* is pleasing, Shadwell's is dull—Heywood's play is by far

the best of the three, as he has made some happy additions to the story."

Again the popularity of an opera called for a burlesque from the rival players, and *Psyche Debauched* was written purposely to secure for the Theatre Royal the audience that the Duke's house had temporarily gained. *Psyche Debauched* has been aptly described by the writer in *Biographia Dramatica* as "a mass of low scurrility and abuse, without either wit or humor," and soon met with the contempt it deserved. The play called for a large cast, which included several well-known actors. There was evidently a goodly number of local hits which probably afforded much enjoyment to the audience. An infusion of dialect, far-fetched operatic devices, a dance of bears, among which was the White Bear of Norwich, who in the end discarding his shape appeared as Cupid, were other noticeable features of this burlesque.

Dryden's first opera, *The State of Innocence and Fall of Man* was printed in folio 1674 and in quarto 1676, 1677 and 1692. It must have been composed without any intention of presentation since it contains a plot, which in its very nature could not have been adapted for a public theatre. It is an operatic version of Milton's *Paradise Lost.*

The overture calls for a "symphony" of warlike music, after which the heavens being opened, rebellious angels whirl through the air and out of sight. Then appear other angels, brandishing swords and singing praise to the Almighty Ruler of Heaven. The scene shifts to Hell, where lamentation is heard. The first act is concerned with the devils mentioned in the early part of Milton's poem. In the second act we are given a glimpse of an artificial Eden and of an equally artificial Eve. She makes her appearance in a most self-conscious manner, is delighted as she views her reflection in the fountain. Her behavior towards Adam is characterized by an almost humorous coquetry. At times one wonders if the opera is not intended as a burlesque on *Paradise Lost.* Yet with all these absurdities, Dryden often displays fine poetical gifts. His opera, in reality a

dramatic poem, shows the degraded taste of the age, preferring what is ingenious and polished to the simplicity and sublimity of Milton.

Evidently several years passed before the appearance of the next opera. When it came, it was the work of a youth of eighteen, who is also said to have performed a part in it. His name, however, does not appear in the cast as given by Downes.

Circe, by Dr. Charles Davenant, the son of Sir William Davenant, was licensed June 19, 1677, by Roger L'Estrange and was presented in the same year at the Duke of York's Theatre, although the Prologue suggests that it was given privately for its first performance. The score, originally by John Banister, was replaced later with music by Purcell. The opera was published in quarto 1677, and again in 1685 and 1703. Downes records a splendid cast for the first performance, including Betterton (Orestes), Mrs. Lee, who later became Lady Slingsby (Circe); Williams (Pylades), Harris (Thoas), Mrs. Betterton (Iphigenia), and Mrs. Twiford (Osmida). To the list of dramatis personae, there must be added Pluto, the Ghost of Clytemnestra, and four nymphs used by Circe in her incantations. The opera was well performed and "answered the expectations of the company."

Two revivals of this opera are recorded; on July 14, 1704, at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, for the benefit of J. Smith, at which time it does not seem to have attracted any special attention; and April 11, 1719, at the same playhouse for the benefit of Mrs. Bullock.

The original prologue, although written by Dryden, was trite, and he later rewrote it; the epilogue was from the pen of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, the well-known literary rake. The plot of the opera is drawn from the Greek tragedy, *Iphigenia in Taurus*. Davenant's alterations are many and bold, the most prominent of which is making Circe the wife of Thoas, the Scythian king. There is a curious confusion of heathen mythology and Christian theology, while other anachronisms are frequent. This plot is

more intricate than those of the opera in general. Iphigenia, the priestess of Diana, is beloved by Ithacus, the son of Circe. Although friendly to him, she does not reciprocate his affection. Thoas, Circe's husband, has turned on Iphigenia his lustful eye, and in consequence of this she has incurred the hatred and jealousy of the queen. Through the power of her magic, Circe speaks with Pluto, and from him she learns that it is written in the "book of fate" that her husband and her son shall that day meet a cruel death. This destiny may be averted by the sacrifice of a stranger who shall be seen on the island the same morning, and whom the priestess shall select for an offering.

Pylades and Orestes meanwhile land at the port and soon find that they are among hostile people. Weary and anxious, they lie down, and soothed by the music of unseen voices, fall asleep. Their rest is disturbed by the arrival of the queen and her attendants. The queen immediately falls in love with Orestes and her attentions quickly become so marked as to arouse the king's anger. Meanwhile Orestes has been selected by the priestess as the sacrifice to Diana. Thoas determines to show no clemency. But Circe, having learned that Orestes is Iphigenia's brother, informs her of that fact, and Iphigenia, with all the agony of despair, pleads with the king for Orestes' life, but Thoas remains inexorable. Circe determines to interfere. Magician that she is, she causes Orestes to be taken in a chariot drawn by dragons to her 'Inchanted Palace," where she joins him. Before long they are interrupted by Thoas, who finally obtains the queen's consent to the arrest of Orestes. At this critical moment word is brought that the comrades of Orestes have attacked the island and are doing great damage. Orestes is rescued and leaves Circe. The Greeks, Iphigenia with them, start homeward, only to be driven back by a storm. Orestes, suddenly demented, meets Thoas, and in a fight kills him. Then he and Circe have a lover's quarrel during which he stabs her and kills himself. The tragedy closes as the queen expires.

Here it may be seen what an important part machines and

scenery could play in an opera, for Langbaine observes that "the scenes and machines may give it a title to that species of drammatick poetry called an opera." It is also interesting to note the frequency of the use of magic, the familiar and repeated appearances of supernatural beings, all of which were essential, organic parts of the plot. There are many scenes which later became favorite operatic conventions. Such are the cave scenes, Iris on the rainbow, sleep of the hero in a bower surrounded by maidens, chariots springing from the ground and possibly others. Nymphs, Iris, Cupid, Morpheus are the supernatural personages introduced.

Dr. Davenant has managed all his accessories in an effective way. Lightning, storm, thunder, dance of the winds, song of the bacchanals, song of the sirens, symphonies, rumblings in the earth, as occasion requires, are used to create a setting harmonious with the action of the plot.

This opera is especially plentiful in dances. It has dances of magicians, of combatants, of bacchanals, of "Phansy," of pleasant dreams, of spirits and of others. The chorus is composed of priests.

Under 1680, we find mention of an opera called *Alexis's Paradise*, but beyond this nothing is known. In 1722 was published a piece with the title, *Alexis' Paradise or A Trip to the Garden of Love at Vauxhall*, by James Newton, which may be a revival or alteration of the opera.

The Loves of Dido and Aeneas, in three short acts, by Nahum Tate with score by Purcell, is the first opera in English of which we have positive proof that the entire libretto was set to music. It was written at the request of Mr. Josias Priest, the students of whose boarding-school presented it. The date of the composition has been much discussed and as yet no satisfactory conclusions have been reached. *The Oxford History of Music* gives the date 1680, although other authorities place it later. In this operatic production Purcell's share was marked "with a liveliness of fancy and maturity of judgment that astonished his audience and would have reflected honor on any musician then

in England." (Busby) Of this opera an excellent critic says: "The point that is most conspicuous in *Dido and Aeneas* is its simple sincerity. The composer forsaking the artificialities which had latterly possessed that stage when music was employed, endeavors to treat his characters as human beings and to make them express genuine feeling." (*Oxford History of Music III* 297) Davey has called attention to its technical achievements as follows: "The music is always admirable, as dramatically expressive as that of Lanier, Lawes or Humfrey combined with constructive power and contrapuntal mastery such as they never attempted. In particular, the combination of pathetic declamation with a ground bass was a triumph of novelty and invention. These exactly opposite resources were fused into a death song of surpassing beauty. A most spirited chorus *To the hills and the vales* and a trio *Fear no danger to ensue* are other strong points of this opera."

The story is the familiar Virgilian tale with slight variations. Anna is represented as a woman of insight and feeling. She advises Dido to return the love of Aeneas, and when Dido continues to manifest indifference Anna tells Aeneas to note that the eyes of Dido contradict her lips. When Aeneas is warned by a spirit that he must leave the queen, he seeks her for a farewell meeting. She rebukes him for his infidelity. In consequence he offers to disregard the commands of the gods but Dido's obstinacy drives him away. The tragedy closes as she stabs herself on her funeral pyre.

Witches and sorceresses are introduced effectively in several scenes. The diction of the opera is not of a high order, although it is superior to that of the later Italian-English operas of the first decade of the eighteenth century, if we except the operatic works of Congreve and Addison.

Next we come to *Noah's Flood, or The Destruction of the World,* attributed to Edward Ecclestone, an opera "never acted," and from the various advertisements inserted to attract purchasers, it seems to have been "never sold." It is a sequel to Dryden's *State of Innocence;* and while it has

some degree of merit, it is greatly inferior to Dryden's poem.

Noah's Flood was printed in quarto in 1679 and was dedicated to her Grace the Duchess of Monmouth. In 1685, new cuts were prepared for it and its title was changed to *The Cataclism or General Deluge of the World.* In 1691 its title was again changed, this time to *The Deluge or The Destruction of the World.* Another edition in 12 mo. came out in 1714 with the title *Noah's Flood; or The History of the General Deluge.* The preface of this edition tries to pass it off as a new piece of unknown authorship.

The dramatis personae include Noah, his family, Sin, Death, angels good and bad. The stage directions call for Noah's Ark, for the land to be covered with water except one mountain peak, and introduces all the horrors of the flood. The time element and the Biblical narrative are both treated very freely. The play comes to a conclusion with the destruction of Babel.

On June 3, 1685, there was presented at the Queen's Theatre in Dorset Garden Dryden's opera, *Albion and Albanius,* an allegorical satire on the Whigs, intended to expose the fanciful doctrines of the Lord Shaftesbury and his adherents. It was also intended as a panegyric on Charles II. and his brother, James II., who were represented in the characters of Albion and Albanius. Its first performance was given on the day the Duke of Monmouth landed in the west. "The nation being in great consternation, it was perform'd but six times which not answering half the charge involved the company very much in debt." (Downes) The music, which was very inferior, was written by Grabu, who published it in 1687 with a dedication to James II. The libretto was printed in folio in 1685, and in quarto in 1691.

The plot runs in brief as follows: At the restoration of Albion (Charles II.), Augusta (London) repents of her disloyalty. Archon (General Monck) tells Augusta he has come from the Caledonian shore to save her and to restore Albion, whose reign quickly closes when Albanius (James

II.) assumes the government and Albion is apotheosized.

Before Dryden had presented his opera publicly, Charles died and it became necessary for Dryden to modify his original plan so that instead of glorifying Charles alone, he made Charles and James co-partners in glory.

The plot contains nothing ingenious; the deities introduced are those of Greece and Rome. The diction, however, is both lyrical and beautiful. Elaborate scenery was used. At the opening the scene is a "street of palaces." In the foreground are equestrian statues of gold mounted on pedestals of marble, bearing the imperial arms of England. Mercury descends in a "chariot drawn by ravens." Later the clouds divide and Juno appears in a "machine drawn by peacocks; while a symphony is playing" it moves gently forward, and as it descends it opens, discovering the tail of the peacock so large as to almost screen the entire stage.

The second act opens with decorations equally lavish. The scene is a "poetical Hell." "There is a figure of Prometheus, chained to a rock, the vulture knawing his liver; Sisyphus rolling the stone; the Belides and others. Beyond, abundance of figures in various torments. Then a great arch of fire. Behind this, three pyramids of flames in perpetual agitation. Beyond this, glowing fire, which terminates the prospect." (Stage Directions)

Other interesting scenes are Neptune rising out of the water with a train of rivers, tritons and sea-nymphs; view of Dover Cliffs with the castle on top; cave of Proteus, consisting of several arches of rock-work adorned with mother-of-pearl, coral and an abundance of shells rising from the sea. Albion seizes Proteus, who changes into a lion, a crocodile, a dragon and finally resumes his own shape again.

After *Albion and Albanius* no new opera was recorded until 1690, when *The Prophetess, or The History of Diocle-sian,* founded on Beaumont and Fletcher's *Prophetess* "with alterations after the manner of an opera" was presented at the Queen's Theatre. In the quarto published the same year these alterations are ascribed to Betterton. The pro-

logue, written by Dryden, was suppressed for political reasons. The vocal and instrumental music, composed by Purcell, is elaborate and of remarkable beauty and variety.

According to Downes, this great opera gratified the expectations of court and city and got the author great reputation. The scenes, machines and "cloaths" were costly. Cibber complains that while this opera was in appearance very successful, its receipts did not balance the expenditure. In addition every branch of theatrical business had been sacrificed to the "getting up" of *The Prophetess* and *King Arthur* so that general discontent followed. This opera was frequently revived, part of it being given in 1784 with a Jubilee in commemoration of Handel and Shakspere. The cast on this occasion included Lewis, Whitfield, Hill, Clarke, Davies, Quick, Mrs. Bates, Mrs. S. Kemble, Mrs. Inchbald.

The opera has practically the same plot as the play, though somewhat abridged. In Act III some figures come out of the hangings and dance. Then they attempt to sit on some chairs which slip from under them and join in the dance. The story comes from Roman tradition. Delphia the prophetess has foretold to Dioclesian that he shall become emperor when he shall have killed the "wild boar." In order to hasten the fulfillment of the prophecy, Dioclesian spends his time killing wild boars. But the empire does not come. One day he hears Charinus, the emperor, promise half of the empire and the hand of his sister Aurelia in marriage to the one who shall kill Aper. Charinus suspects Aper of having killed Numerian, the other emperor. Aper carries around in a closed carriage the decaying body of Numerian, whom he has killed. On the pretense that the emperor is too ill to consider business, he refuses all access to him. Dioclesian kills Aper but gives Aurelia to Maximian, his companion, and also turns over to him the empire. Then Dioclesian, with his long-beloved Drusilla, the niece of the Prophetess, retires to a simple life. Maximian, fearful lest Dioclesian shall repent of his generosity, seeks to kill him but is foiled by the Prophetess.

As a play, the probable work of Fletcher and Massinger,

it is finely written and has suffered less in being turned into an opera than any other Elizabethan play.

For the next few years operas came frequently. Some of them were old plays; some were original and artistic; while yet again some were original in the direction of the comic, but otherwise show little art or power of any kind.

King Arthur, or the British Worthy, a dramatic opera by John Dryden, was acted in 1691 at the Queen's Theatre and was printed in quarto the same year. In his dedication to the Marquis of Halifax, Dryden says: "This poem was the last piece of service which I had the honour to do for my gracious master King Charles II; and though he lived not to see the performance of it on the stage, yet the prologue to it, which was the opera *Albion and Albanius,* was often practiced before him at Whitehall, and encouraged by his royal approbation."

In this production early English opera reached its highest development. The music, composed by Purcell, is "original, vigorous, various and beautiful," and several numbers such as *Come If You Dare, The Frost Spirits Chorus* and *Fairest Isle All Isles Excelling* merit especial praise. The music of *King Arthur* was more popular than the music of any English opera which appeared prior to the *Beggar's Opera* in 1728. The dances were arranged by Mr. Jo. Priest. All told, the opera pleased both Court and City, and was a financial success as well. The cast for the first performance was exceptionally strong, including Betterton, Williams, Kynaston, Sanford, Hodgson, Mrs. Bowman, Mrs. Butler and Mrs. Bracegirdle.

In 1705, for Newman's benefit, the *Frost Scene,* one of the finest parts of *King Arthur,* was presented in connection with the drama, the *Royal Merchant. King Arthur* was revived for Cibber's benefit in 1706 and for general presentation in 1735, when it was given thirty-six times. In 1770 it was altered by David Garrick and presented twenty-one times. As *Arthur and Emmeline* it was acted ten times in 1781.

The principal incident of the play is copied in almost

every circumstance from the adventures in the haunted grove on Olivet in Tasso's *Gerusalemma Liberata.* The story is in brief: King Arthur, King of Britain, and Oswald, King of Kent, are in love with Emmeline, the blind daughter of Conon, the Duke of Cornwall. She loves Arthur, but this fact has not discouraged Oswald. In a war between the two kings, Arthur is victorious, but very generously grants Oswald his freedom. The latter shows his ingratitude by taking the first favorable opportunity to seize Emmeline and carry her away to his castle, whence she is rescued by supernatural power, has her sight restored by Merlin and marries Arthur.

The plot, evidently constructed with a view to the musician's requirements, supplies that variety in scenes which is essential to musical effect. The machinery is simple and well-managed. "The language and ministry of Grimbald, the fierce earthly daemon, are painted with some touches which rise even to sublimity. The conception of Philidel, a fallen angel, retaining some of the hue of heaven, who is touched with repentance, and not without hope of being finally received, is an idea * * * altogether original." (Dryden vii-127)

Genest remarks that the opera pleases both in perusal and in presentation, and finds the chief merit in the characters of Grimbald and Philidel.

The writer in the *Biographia Dramatica,* while disapproving the extravagance of many of the incidents, concludes with a warm appreciation of the skill of Dryden in surmounting all the puerilities with which the story of the legendary prince is encumbered. "The contrast of character between Philidel, a gentle, aerial spirit, friendly to the Christians, and Grimbald, a fierce, earthly, goblin, engaged on the adverse party is not only well designed but executed with the hand of a master."

In the next year (1692) *Cassandra, or the Virgin Prophetess,* by an anonymous author, was acted at the Theatre Royal. It was printed in quarto in 1692 but no copy seems to exist.

In the same year another of Shakspere's dramas was made into an opera. *The Fairy Queen,* an operatic version of the *Midsummer Night's Dream,* was acted at the Queen's Theatre (Dorset Garden) where the "Court and town were wonderfully satisfy'd with it." (Downes) It was printed in quarto in 1692, anonymously.

This opera was superior in presentation to *King Arthur* and *The Prophetess,* especially in "cloaths, for all the singers and dancers, scenes, machines, and decorations, all most profusely set off; and excellently perform'd, chiefly the instrumental and vocal part compos'd by the said Mr. Percell and dances by Mr. Priest." (Downes)

It was doubtless revived, although we have only one record of such a revival, when a concert with *The Fairy Queen* in one act was given in connection with the best scenes of *Marriage a-la-Mode* in two acts.

On the whole this play does not differ materially from the original; several slight changes are made in the dialogue and the character of Hippolita is omitted. Theseus' speech about the "poet's eye" is sadly mutilated. The "mechanicals' " performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe* is inserted in the second act and its place in the fifth is supplied by an elaborate masque. In the the third act after the scene between Titania and Bottom, a masque ensues and "the scene changes to a great wood; a long row of them on each side; a river in the middle; two rows of lesser trees of a different kind just on the side of the river, which meet in the middle and make so many arches; two great dragons make a bridge over the river; their bodies form two arches through which two swans are seen in the river at a distance. * * * While a symphony is playing, the two swans come swimming in through the arches to the bank of the river, as if they would land; these turn themselves into fairies and dance; at the same time the bridge vanishes, and the trees that are arched raise themselves upright. Four savages enter, fright the fairies and danse an entry." Then Juno appears in a machine, her peacocks spread their tails and fill the middle of the stage. After which the scene changes

to a Chinese garden in which two Chinese, a man and a woman, sing. To add to the strangeness and novelty of the general operatic effect, six monkeys come from behind the trees and dance.

The Loves of Mars and Venus by P. Motteux is recorded as a play set to music. It was acted at Little Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1696. It was given as part of Ravencroft's *Anatomist* with which it was also published. It bears a resemblance to Shadwell's *Psyche,* and is in reality a masque. The music was written by Mr. Finger and Mr. J. Eccles.

The story is the well-known fable of the guilty loves of Mars and Venus, and of Vulcan's entrapping them. By so doing he displays them and himself to the ridicule of the august inhabitants of Olympus. Mars is well presented as a passionate lover.

After the *Fairy Queen,* the next recorded opera is the anonymous *Brutus of Alba, or Augusta's Triumph.* It is in the nature of a sequel to Tate's *Brutus of Alba, or The Enchanted Lovers* and was presented at Dorset Garden in 1696. In the next year it was published in quarto by George Powell and John Verbruggen. The music was composed by Daniel Purcell. Genest gives the epitome of this opera about as follows: Brutus, absent in the Gallic war, has left Arsaracus guardian of his kingdom and of Amarante, who is betrothed to Brutus' son, Locrinus. Aware of this, and regardless of it, Arsaracus makes love to Amarante, but to no purpose. In order to sooth his wounded pride Arsaracus secures the aid of Coreb, an evil spirit, who places a certain Sozimon in Aramante's chamber where Locrinus discovers him. To increase his villainy, Arsaracus in company with some ruffians attacks Locrinus. The men are, however, repulsed. Arsaracus clears Amarante's fame, in consideration for which he is given his life.

Genest adds that the author of the opera has borrowed the names Amarante, Ragusa, Arsaracus, and Sozimon from Tate, but the characters are totally different. Other characters, Hercius and Spungius with the good and bad

spirits are taken from Massinger's *Virgin Martyr,* as are also the best parts of the dialogue. Part of the scenery and machines which had been used in *Albion and Albanius* were brought into service in this opera.

Cinthia and Endimion, or the Loves of the Dieties, written by Thomas Durfey and dedicated to the Earl of Romney, was designed for presentation before Queen Mary. After her death it was given with success at the Theatre Royal in 1697 and was printed in quarto the same year. This opera is partly in verse and partly in prose, and has in it some fine lines. There is a double plot, one dealing with low comedy, while the other connects itself with the gods. It has an antimasque. The long list of names and characters in the opera represents the virtues and vices of human nature e. g., Cupid representing desire, wanton and unsatisfied; Pan, ignorance and cruelty; Syrinx, irregular passion, treachery and envy; and a number of others.

The story is taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* with considerable perversion of characters, and from Apuleius' *Golden Ass.* The scene lies in Ionia and on Mount Latmos. Endimion is in love with Cinthia and is loved by Syrinx. The latter gets a sleeping potion from Pan which he gives to Endimion as from Cinthia. Endimion drinks, with the result that he falls into a deep sleep from which he is awakened by a kiss bestowed by Cinthia. Also in this kiss is involved the test of the love of Psyche for Cupid. At the conclusion all turns out properly, for the good are rewarded and the evil punished.

The World in the Moon, our first comic opera, was written by Elkanah Settle and presented at Dorset Garden in 1697. It was published in quarto the same year. The opera is dedicated to Christopher Rich, the manager of the theatre, who expended great sums of money for decorations in order to be assured of success for the opera.

The music was composed by Jeremy Clark and Daniel Purcell. The cast included Williams, Powell, Penkethman, Mrs. Verbruggen, Mrs. Powell and Joe Haines in his *propria persona.* This opera is interesting as throwing light on

several points of the contemporary theatre. It snows that people dodged in and out of the playhouse very much at their pleasure. If one left before the play was over, he was not required to pay the fee. The opera mentions that the performance is "half over by seven o'clock." Another convention is seen in that women of doubtful character wore masks, so that at this time mask was used synonymously with harlot.

There are two plots to the opera and Settle found it difficult to manage them. The first plot connects itself with the "Widow Dawkins," who brings her son Tom to town to request from her landlord, Wildblood, a change in the lease. Wildblood takes Tom to the opera where his simplicity furnishes much amusement. In the second plot Palmerin Worthy, a young man of excellent moral character is in love with Jacintha Stanmore. He has sacrificed his entire fortune to sustain the honor of his brother, and is therefore financially unprepared to marry. Jacintha's father opposes Worthy, and in stead selects for his daughter's husband a rich old widower named Fondlove. At first Jacintha is much disconcerted but finally consents to the marriage on certain conditions, one of which is that Fondlove shall steal her at night from her father's home. He consents, and is caught in a very embarrassing situation, to extricate himself from which he returns to Worthy the estate which he has fraudulently secured from him. Then of course Jacintha's father consents to her union with her lover.

In this opera the machines and scenery are so elaborate as to demand especial consideration. The curtain rises and discovers a "palace with a new arch richly decorated with gold." The ceiling is painted with the figure of Majesty richly seated on a globe encircled with glory and attended by Cupids. Later the scene discovers three grand arches of clouds, filled with figures of Cupids. A cloud rolls away and a silver moon, fourteen feet in diameter, appears, in which is a world consisting of "four grand circles of clouds illustrated with Cupids." Twelve chariots filled with twelve children representing the twelve celestial signs are seen

"riding the clouds." The third arch entirely rolling away, leaves the full prospect terminating with a large landscape of woods, waters, towns. "Cinthia's train of twenty singers and other routine enters and after some music there is a dance of four swans." To them enter five green men upon which the swans take wing and fly into the heavens.

In the second act during a symphony of music a palace of Cinthia, "near twenty foot high," appears with the clouds of the moon. The palace is supported upon twelve pillars of lapis lazuli, fluted with golden darts and shafted with silver. In a later scene another palace "near thirty foot high"[1] even more elaborate is set off with a vista of "Dorick pillars of Egyptian marble terminating in a triumphal arch."[1] The fourth act opens with a "wood near thirty feet high." "An imperial bed appears on the stage of crimson silk, enrich'd and furl'd with gold, and other ornaments * * * Tom lying in it." "Two dancers enter who are immediately interrupted by thunder. The bed and all the furniture drop down under the stage."[1] The last scene is Cinthia's bower, "being a prospect of terras walk of eight several stages one above the other, each stage contains a range of stonework extending from side to side"[1] highly decorated. "On thirty-two pedestals are planted sixteen golden flower-pots and sixteen statues of gods and goddesses. Through the centre advancing twenty-four foot high, is an ascent of marble steps. This set of scenes is encompass'd round with arborage-work, circled round with double festoons of flowers tyed up in ribbons of gold terminating at fifty foot deep, with a prospect of a garden above the highest terrace. Above fifty figures are seen upon the several terras's, some of which descend upon the stage for entertainment."[1]

In 1699 two operas are recorded, *Rinaldo and Armida*, and the *Island Princess*. The first of these is called on its title page a tragedy, but it is really a "serious opera." It was written by John Dennis and presented in 1699 at Little Lincoln's Inn Fields with Betterton and Mrs. Barry in the title roles. It was dedicated to His Grace the Duke of Ormond. The music was composed by John Eccles.

1 Stage Directions.

The action is placed in the time of the first Crusade. Rinaldo, the leader of the Christian army, is conveyed to the top of a mountain in the Canaries by the power of Armida, a heathen enchantress, who has fallen in love with him. Here Rinaldo becomes enamoured of Armida and they pass their lives in pleasure. But in order that Jerusalem may be taken by the Christians, Rinaldo must be found, so Ubaldo, Carlo and Urania are sent for him. When he learns their mission, he is distracted between love for fame and love for Armida, but decides to leave her. In consequence she stabs herself but dies happily on learning that Rinaldo shall soon be reunited to her. Rinaldo wishes for death at Jerusalem that he may be restored to Armida.

The plot, as may readily be seen, is founded on Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered,* and in parts has considerable merit.

The Island Princess, or the Generous Portuguese, Fletcher's play of the first title, changed into an opera by Peter Antony Motteux, was presented at Drury Lane in 1699 and published the same year with a second edition in 1701. The music was written by Daniel Purcell, Mr. Clarke and Mr. Leveridge. Whincop says the opera was given "with great applause," while Dibdin claims it "had but little success." Miss Campion, whose brilliant career was soon to be ended by death, gained considerable reputation by her singing in this opera. *The Island Princess* was revived in 1702 when the bill specified that Mr. Leveridge would perform in the part of the opera which he had written. December the tenth, 1739, witnessed another revival at Covent Garden.

The principal variation from Fletcher's drama are as follows: A considerable portion of the text is omitted, entire scenes at times being left out. The speeches of the individual characters are curtailed and the character of Quisana, the aunt of Quisara, has not been introduced at all. Lines have been taken from one person and assigned to another. In the original Quisara becomes insane, while in the latter she is simply imprisoned. In the essential facts, however, the plots remain the same. Motteux has managed in some way to draw his characters so as to make them

mere shadows of Fletcher's. There seems to be a conscious striving to eliminate coarseness, both apparent and implied, both in language and in plot.

The operatic elements are seen in the entertainments of music and dancing presented to celebrate the king's return, in the scene where Armusia, while lying in an orange grove, is entertained by the singing of a clown and of his wife, in the incantation to musical accompaniment by the brahmin and his attendants, and in the mournful musical accompaniment to the last act. *The Four Seasons,* while not an organic part of this opera, was played in connection with it. This musical interlude, the author states, was designed, however, for another season and another occasion. It was written by Motteux, the music being supplied by Jeremy Clarke.

The opening year of the eighteenth century witnessed the performance at Drury Lane of J. Oldmixon's opera, *The Grove or Love's Paradise.* The author in his preface acquaints the critics with the fact that this play is neither a translation nor a paraphrase; that the story is entirely new, and that it was first intended for a pastoral, though in the last three acts the dignity of the characters raised it into the form of a tragedy. It was published in quarto in 1700, with an epilogue written by Farquhar. The music was composed by Daniel Purcell. The cast included among others, Cibber, Mills, Powell, Mrs. Oldfield and Mrs. Rogers.

The scene presents a province of Italy near the Gulf of Venice. At the opening of the play, Aurelia, the daughter of the emperor, is talking to some ladies, when a messenger announces that the emperor of Greece is going to visit her and her husband, whose real name is Eudosius, but who goes by the name of Amintor. Aurelia manifests great agitation at this announcement because she has married contrary to her father's wishes. A number of thrilling situations develop but all work out happily and she is reconciled to her father.

Of the Fletcherian tragi-comedy, *The Mad Lover,* as an opera our knowledge is limited to the brief notices in the

Biographia Dramatica, which say that with the masque, *Acis and Galatea,* published without date, are "the musical entertainments in an opera called *The Mad Lover.*" The masque was performed presumably in 1701 at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane by His Majesty's servants. Another performance of which we have not the date seems to have occurred at Lincoln's Inn Fields. *Acis and Galatea* was published quarto 1701. Dibdin calls it a "musical trifle" for which John Eccles supplied the music.

In the same year (1701) another opera was presented at Drury Lane. It was called *The Virgin Prophetess, or the Fate of Troy* and was written by Elkanah Settle and dedicated to Sir Charles Duncomb,knt. The musical entertainment in this opera was furnished by Mr. Finger. Dibdin says notwithstanding Rich did his utmost to popularize this opera, it had little success. In the cast were Mills, Wilkes, Mrs. Rogers and Mrs. Oldfield.

The plot is founded on the tale of Troy. Diana descends in chariot and tells Cassandra that Troy's fate may be reversed by the sacrifice of a royal maiden to Grecian swords. Cassandra goes to the camp of the Greeks, seeking death, but Menelaus sends her back to Troy in safety. Cassandra is represented as guardian of Astianax. She has a robed statue of Diana and in praying to this deity, she is in the habit of kissing the robe. Alcestis, eager for the death of the prophetess, poisons the robe, which is kissed shortly afterwards by Astianax, who, maddened by the poison, dies. In the last act Troy is captured and burned; Menelaus kills Paris, Helen leaps into the flames, while Cassandra's fate is left in uncertainty. Genest's remarks are quite apropos: "Settle's harangue is bad and his deviations from the real story are disgusting. In every respect this is a wretched piece; but if the scenes were executed according to description, it must have been a fine spectacle. In the first act six white elephants were introduced, an absurdity hardly excusable even in an opera."

CHAPTER IV

THE BEGINNINGS OF ITALIAN OPERA IN ENGLAND

After the presentation of the last opera the tendency toward Italian opera became marked. So it was an important occasion in the history of opera when on January 16, 1705, at Drury Lane, came the performance of *Arsinoe, Queen of Cypress,* written by Peter Motteux and furnished with music by Thomas Clayton. This piece is interesting as being the first Anglicized opera with Italian music, sung in England. Hawkins quotes Mr. Addison as saying that *Arsinoe* was the first opera that gave the English a taste of Italian music. Mr. Addison also states that it met with great success, and he afterward suffered Clayton to furnish the score for *Rosamond,* so it may be inferred that he thought it a fine composition. But a better judge (the translator, Abbe Raguenet's *Parallel*) pronounces it with the exception of *Rosamond* the most execrable performance that ever disgraced the stage. The libretto is an adaptation of the Italian original, while the music is a combination and variation of Italian airs to which Clayton tried to give unity. Clayton thus prefaces the *Book of the Opera,* "The design of this entertainment being to introduce the Italian manner of music on the English stage, which has not been before attempted, I was oblig'd to have an Italian opera translated, in which the words, however, mean in several places, suited much better with the manner of musick, than others more poetical would do. The style of this musick is to express the passions, which is the soul of musick. And though the voices are not equal to the Italian, yet I have engaged the best that were to be found in England, and I have not been wanting, to the utmost of my diligence, in the instructing them. The musick being in recitative, may not, at first meet with their general acceptation, as is to be hoped for from the audiences being

better acquainted with it, but if this attempt shall, by pleasing the nobility and gentry, be a means of bringing this manner of musick to be used in my native country, I shall think all my study and pains well employed."

The cast included Mrs. Tofts, Mrs. Cross, Mrs. Lindsay, Hughes and Leveridge. *Arsinoe* did not suit the voice of Margarita de l'Epine, who sang only in Italian, so the part of the prima donna was assigned to Mrs. Tofts, who, therefore, was the first prima donna who sang on the English stage in what was professedly the Italian opera. *Arsinoe* seems to have attained considerable popularity, being revived during the next few years.

In 1705 was published in quarto an opera called *The Royal Martyr, King Charles I,* by Alexander Fyfe. It was never acted. In 1709 the same play was published as a tragedy. Of it Genest fittingly says that it is one of the worst plays ever written. There seems to be little reason for its being styled an opera since it contains no masque, no especial scenes and only nine lines of music.

Here Charles I quarrels with Parliament and Cromwell. Many of the issues of the day are suggested and for characters are taken among others such men as King Charles, Cromwell, Prince Rupert, the Earl of Essex, and Sir Henry Vane. The queen also appears several times. She visits the king in prison and while in converse with him faints. Lady Buccleugh is the only other woman in the play who has a speaking part. Charles is not beheaded upon the stage, although he is led upon the scaffold, feels the edge of the sword and addresses the spectators. After this he is led to prepare for death, which is announced after a short interval. The last scene brings the little Prince of Wales into the presence of Cromwell whom the brave child scores roundly for the murder of his father. The play closes with Cromwell's star in the ascendant.

Beginning February 21, 1706, at the Haymarket, *The British Enchanters, or No Music Like Love,* was presented for twelve performances. Betterton, Booth, Verbruggen, Bowman, Mrs. Bracegirdle, Mrs. Barry, and Mrs. Bowman

suggest an all-star cast. The opera was written by George Granville, Lord Lansdowne, and was, according to Downes, "very exquisitely done, especially all the singing parts, making love the acme of all terrestial, which infinitely arrided both sexes, and pleased the town as well as any English modern opera."

Coelius, King of Britain, so the story goes, insists that his daughter Oriana shall mary Constantius, emperor of Rome. The ceremony is interrupted by the ill omens of the good enchantress Urganda, the friend of Amadis, Oriana's lover. Amadis has killed Ardan whose brother and sister Arcalaus and Arcabon, plan vengeance. After getting Amadis into their power, Arcabon advances to stab him, but instead falls desperately in love with him and gives him his freedom. Amadis rejects her love, however, and is again imprisoned only to be released by Urganda, who gives him a sword. He kills Arcalaus and finally marries Oriana. In a later edition of this opera Urganda is siezed with prophetic fury and proclaims the distant doom of kings unborn and nations yet to come. And that the audience might not be incredulous the scene represented Queen Anne and all the triumphs of Her Majesty's reign. Dibdin speaks of this opera in these words: "The intention of the author was * * * to correct the monstrous extravange introduced in operas by something more naturally gratifying to the senses. * * * This is the most complete of Landsdowne's (sic) works; * * * there are in it many wretched defects * * * those passages that have merit seldom rise beyond mediocrity * * * there is not a single line of great genius in the whole."

A few weeks later, March 7, 1706, there was performed at the Haymarket an opera called *The Temple of Love*, consisting all of singing and dancing. The singing was composed by Monsieur Sidgeon, and the version into English was made by Monsieur Motteux from the Italian. Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Laroon, Mr. Cook, Maria Gallia interpreted the singing, and there were several other men and women for the choruses. The dances were all made and performed

by Frenchmen. It lasted but six days and answered not their expectations. Such is the substance of Downes' remarks. The prologue was spoken by Mr. Booth. The scene lies in Arcadia, and the time of the action is the same as that of the presentation. Burney says the music was not good, and that it was more German than Italian.

The plot and characters are thoroughly conventional. Sylvander, a shepherd, has been many years in search of Orinda, his betrothed from childhood, from whom fate has separated him. Of course he sees her without knowing her, falls in love with her, and discovers after all that she is his long-sought sweetheart. She has the strawberry mark on her shoulder. Thyrsis and Phillis, shepherd and shepherdess, after flirtings on both sides very properly fall in love. There is no complexity of plot, neither is there skill in characterization. Possibly the most interesting thing that can be said about the opera is that Mrs. Bracegirdle played the part of Phillis.

The year 1706 marked the presentation of a larger number of operas than any year prior to that date. Already we have recorded two operas, and there are others to follow. The comic opera, *The Wonders in the Sun, or The Kingdom of Birds*, given at the Haymarket, was written by Thomas Durfey, and was dedicated to the celebrated Kit Cat Club, and was illustrated with a great variety of songs. Part of the music was by Draghi. It is said that the numerous songs of this opera were written by several of the most eminent wits of the age. Among others which seem to be the work of a writer superior to Durfey, is a song entitled *Dame of Honour*. "It is difficult," according to Hawkins, writing in 1776, "to say which is the most to be admired, the song for the sentiments, or the air for the sweetness of its melody."

Gonzales, a Spanish philosopher, and his man Diego, so runs the story, enter the world of the sun. When they are in distress, the "daemon" of Socrates appears, promises his assistance to Gonzales and then accompanies him throughout the action, remaining invisible to everybody

except Gonzales and Diego. These two are carried also to the kingdom of birds, which they explore. When they have tarried a sufficiently long time in this country, "the daemon" wishes them a pleasant trip home and then disappears. To the great delight of Diego they return to their earthly habitation.

Again in 1706 we have *Camilla*, the second opera in the Italian style. The libretto was the work of Owen Mac Swiney, while the score is ascribed by Hawkins to Bononcini, but the authorship of the score has been contested. The opera was presented first at Drury Lane and afterward at the Haymarket. Mrs. Tofts interpreted the title role and by her grace, her fine voice and acting she achieved her greatest triumph. Of Mrs. Tofts Cibber says: "She took her first grounds of music here in our own country, before the Italian taste had so highly prevailed, and was then not an adept in it: yet whatever defects the fashionably skillful might find in her manner, she had in the general sense of her spectators charm that few of the most learned singers ever arrive at. The beauty of her fine proportioned figure and exquisitely sweet, silvery tone of her voice, with that peculiar, rapid swiftness of her throat, were perfections not to be imitated by art or labor." The success of this opera may be attested by the fact that during the next four years it was presented sixty-four times. In *Camilla* the roles which were sung by the English performers, were translated into English, while the Italians sang in their own language. Hawkins says: "The conduct of the whole was referred to Nicolas Haym * * * an excellent musician; Valentini performed the part of Turnus; and notwithstanding the inconsistencies of the performance, it is said *Camilla* never met with so good a reception abroad as here." Whincop sums up the inconsistencies of the situation in the following words: "And now there was something very ridiculous in Italian opera, notwithstanding the music was good, and the voices exquisitely fine; for certainly none, not even Farinello's, ever went beyond Mrs. Tofts, and Niccolini was admired both

for his voice and action; but what made them so ridiculous was the strange mixtures of languages. Mrs. Tofts, who sung in English, was addressed by Niccolini in Italian. Valentini paid his court to the Baroness, who performed the part of Lavinia, and she answered him in a kind of Dutch-English. No two lovers seem to understand each other, but honest Dick Leveridge in the part of Linco and My Dame Lindsey in that of Tullia."

The story is a sort of prototype of the English-Italian opera. Camilla, supposedly a shepherd's niece, is in reality the queen of the Volscians, her father having been dethroned. As Camilla is telling the story of her misfortunes to Linco, Prenesto, the son of King Latinus, enters pursued by a boar. Camilla, by a sure aim of her javelin, kills the boar and of course wins the love of the prince. She then prevails upon the king, his father, to grant her a request which proves to be vengeance upon the people who have dethroned her father. By this means she is enabled to arouse her own people to redress her wrongs. In the end, however, all comes out beautifully and she mitigates everything because of her love for Prenesto.

After *Camilla* came Addison's *Rosamond,* an opera in three acts with music by Clayton. It was unsuccessful from the first and on later attempts to revive it, it was scarcely more favorably received. The cast included the best singers of the time in England, among whom were Mrs. Tofts, Mrs. Lindsey, Signora Maria Gallia (sister to Margarita de l'Epine), Hughes, Leveridge and Holcomb. Hawkins says relative to this opera: "A criticism of this most wretched opera is more than it deserves * * * the music preponderating against the elegance and reputation of its author, bore it down the third night of its presentation." Edwards in his *Prima Donna* remarks: "Strange that so few years after the death of Purcell, the English should have recognized as their leading composer—at least as regards prominence of position—one who, while trading on the accident of having been born in England, borrowed his airs from Italy and received help in arranging them from

a German violoncellist named Haym, and a French violinist named Dieupart."

Rosamond is of interest solely because of its author. The characters are without form and substance, and the situations lack effectiveness. Curiously Addison kills his heroine in the second act and has no counterbalancing force to sustain the interest throughout the rest of the play. The short lines render it unpleasing as a literary effort, and while the verse has considerable lyrical cadence the rhymes are frequently execrably bad. Rosamond's story is the familiar English tradition of Queen Elinor's jealousy of the fair mistress of King Henry. Elinor determines to bring to a close all intimacy of the guilty lovers. With that purpose she seeks Rosamond in her bower and compels her to drain a drinking potion which she pretends is poison. When Rosamond has become to all appearances dead, the queen sends her to a convent where she intends for her to remain in confinement for the remainder of her days. Henry is fearfully grieved on being told that Rosamond is dead, but he relents toward Elinor when he learns the truth.

Rosamond was succeeded by *Thomyris, Queen of Scythia,* presented at Drury Lane in 1707, and at the Haymarket in 1708. P. Motteux wrote the libretto while the airs were selected from sundry foreign operas of Bononcini, Scarlatti, Casparini, and Albinoni; the recitative and accompaniments were entrusted to Pepusch. Although most of the songs were excellent, *Thomyris* was not at first a success, but in the following year with a cast which included Valentini, Margarita and Mrs. Tofts it was performed alternately with *Camilla* for six weeks. For performance of this opera, Heidigger, manager of the Haymarket, secured a subscription from the gentry and nobility.

The plot of *Thomyris* is rather more interesting and complicated than the general run of Italian-English operas. Cleora, the heroine, is the niece of Cyrus and by him has been betrothed to Tigranes, king of Armenia, who, incognito, is taken prisoner by the Scythians. His identity becomes known through Cleora, who also has been a prisoner

and who has attracted the affections of Orontes, the son and heir to Queen Thomyris. Inasmuch as Tigranes and Orontes love the same maiden one or the other must be disposed of. This is accomplished by Orontes giving Tigranes his liberty and making war on him. Orontes falls into the power of Tigranes, who returns the courtesy which Orontes has formerly shown him. It is agreed to settle the claim to the maiden by combat, in which Orontes is successful. Thomyris, who has opposed Cleora, is now won over, and a grand climax is reached amid the joys of marriage.

Congreve's opera *Semele* was printed in quarto in 1707. Whincop says it was not acted when it was first written. In 1743 it was made into an oratorio by Handel and was given at Covent Garden. The story as told by Ovid has been altered to conform to the characters of the opera. The fable is well conducted. The measure of the air is various and well-suited to the situations of the dramatis personae. The author accounts for having no regard for rhyme or equality of measure in that part of the dialogue designed for recitative, which he says, is only more tunable speaking and a kind of prose in music.

The story as its name suggests is placed in the early history of Greek life. Semele, the daughter of Cadmus, is to be given in marriage to Athamas, prince of Boeotia. Being loved by Jupiter, she is loath to celebrate this marriage. When the omens are sought, they prove unfavorable and the wedding is postponed. Semele is taken away by Jupiter, who tries to keep her safe from the malice of Juno. Through affecting the voice of Ino, Semele's sister, Juno gains admission to Semele and entraps her by persuading her to ask Jupiter to come in all his glory when he next visits her. Jupiter promises to do for her whatsoever she requests—only to regret his madness when it is too late. He grants her request but in so doing brings death and destruction upon her.

Love's Triumph, our next opera, comes in the following year (1708). It was written by P. Motteux and was acted at the Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket. Like similar

productions of the period it was sung by a combination cast of English and Italian singers, each using his own language. The cast included Mrs. Tofts, Mrs. Lindsay, the Baroness, Margarita de l'Epine, Signor Valentino and Mr. Leveridge.

In the dedication to Thomas Frankland, Motteux says: "You know that 'twas to please one of the best judges and patrons of the art that three of the greatest composers have each set an act of it. * * * It (this opera) has, at least, the advantage of being more of a piece and free from improprieties than the former: And if it makes a better appearance, it will not owe a little to Mr. Dieupart, for his share in the contrivance of the entertainments, and his supplying what recitative and other music was necessary."

The opera is short; the plot is slight; the verse has merit. The dances and choruses of shepherds and shepherdesses, of which there were a goodly number, must have been an attractive feature. The scene is placed in the Arcadian land of shepherds. There are three pairs of lovers of which one pair, mere peasants, serve for the introduction of an undercurrent of humor. Liso and Olindo, Italian shepherds, are in love with Eurilla and Licisca respectively. Liso and Eurilla are at cross purposes, as are also Olindo and Lisisca. After several attempts on the part of each maid to win her companion's lover, all is adjusted satisfactorily and each is mated where the heart responds.

Pyrrhus and Demetrius was written by Owen Mac Swiney and was presented at the Haymarket in 1708 and 1709. The music is adapted from the Italian of Scarlatti, by Nicolo Haym, and attained considerable popularity. The opera was sung partly in English and partly in Italian by a cast of superior excellence, including Valentini, Grimaldi, Mrs. Tofts, Margarita, the Baroness, and others. *Pyrrhus and Demetrius* was played at increased prices, no less than thirty times. The songs "are short, simple, and elegant for the time and must have required great talent in the singers to render them so highly attractive as they appear to have been."

Clotilda was an opera of composite authorship and is quite unimportant. It was made up by Heidigger and was first presented in England in 1709. The boxes on the stage for the first performance were advanced to fifteen shillings. Burney says: "This opera was composed * * * half in English and half in Italian, as it was performed. The composition is not contemptible; and yet it seems to have come into the world and gone out of it so quietly as scarcely to have left any memorial of its existence."

The predominance of the Italian spirit in the opera has shown a steady increase in part of the audience for high class music and for opera in the Italian form. The preface to our last opera before Handel will show the prevailing conditions: "When I first designed the following sheets, I proposed to myself three things, viz. In Eumenes to represent a lover mourning for the loss of his mistress; next in Altimera, to give a tender instance of the most sublime friendship; thirdly, in the Regisick Person Alarbas to manifest the large power of beauty. But the poem being sometime since drawn according to the model of our English Dramatick Opera's, any person that in the least is acquainted with the late performances, will easily account for its appearing in this manner before it had passed the stage, if they will be pleased to observe, that the nature of the play will not admit of its representation in either house: the opera theatre being wholly taken up with Italian airs, and the other totally excluding the musical part."

Alarbas, a dramatic opera, was written by a gentleman of quality, and was printed in 1709. The play opens with a conversation between Lysander and Thrallax, who give some idea of the other characters. Alarbas is a voluptuary prince. Altimera, an Arcadian lady, is too low in rank for his bride and too proud for his mistress. Alarbas' attitude to the young lady is bold, at times insulting. In the end he seeks forgiveness; is repulsed; attempts to stab himself; is completely forgiven and it seems that wedding bells will ring.

The scene is on a pleasant "champian" country, prospect

of a palace in the distance. Cupid descends in a chariot drawn by doves, into a myrtle grove. At another time in the grove of Proserpine, enter two priests with lighted tapers who tell Eumenes that he shall see his Angelia, who is supposed to be drowned. Angelia appears as a ghost, rebukes Eumenes till he is half insane; but he is eventually restored and all is forgiven.

CHAPTER V

FOREIGN INFLUENCE

We have traced the English opera from the Restoration to the coming of Handel; we must now consider the foreign operas (other than Italian) and foreign influences of an operatic nature. At the outset it will be well to note the attitude of Charles II. to music.

On his return to England, the king rallied many of the musicians of the time of his father to the old church music. But the dignity and majestic harmony of the church music of the great Orlando Gibbon and others of his class did not please his majesty. He therefore considered the introduction of the gay, rapid French movement to which he could beat time. His changes were radical, as the following entry from Evelyn's *Diary* will show: "One of his majesty's chaplains preached: after which instead of the grave and solemn wind music accompanying the organ was introduced a concert of twenty-four violins between every pause, after the French fantastical light way, better suiting a tavern or a playhouse than a church. This was the first time of change and now we no more hear the cornet which gave life to the organ; that instrument is quite left off in which the English were so skillful." But the introduction of four and twenty violins is not all that bears testimony to Charles' effort to transplant French music. He selected two of the most promising choir boys, John Banister and Pelham Humfrey, whom he sent abroad to study French music. Several years later, they returned imbued with French ideas which they subsequently wove into their compositions. Humfrey had studied under Lulli, and was strongly affected by the declamatory method of the French theatrical style, on which he laid the foundation for a new kind of church music. He also wrote several songs for dramas,

as *Where the Bee Sucks* in the *Tempest,* and *Wherever I Am and Whatever I Do* in the *Conquest of Granada.* He influenced English opera only indirectly, and then in the score through the fact that Purcell was his pupil. Purcell, however, was too great an artist not to be original and his training merely directed the course of his talent. It is claimed by musical critics that Purcell's music shows the influence of Lulli, which may have been due to unconscious absorption during his youthful years. It is barely possible that both men were influenced by the same Italian masters for Purcell acknowledges an indebtedness to Italian music.

Charles' cordial reception of the emigre French musicians, Grabu and Cambert, furnished an excellent opportunity for direct influence of French opera upon that of the English. Grabu, not as yet the author of an opera score, came to England in 1666 and was immediately appointed by the king to supersede Banister as head of His Majesty's violins. In 1672 (or 1674) he appears to have assisted Cambert in the preparation of *Ariadne* for presentation in England. Grabu's position at Court led Dryden to secure his collaboration in *Albion and Albanius* in the preface to which the poet heaped upon the musician praises as profuse as they were evidently insincere if we are to judge from subsequent action. This is Grabu's only English opera score and critics are unanimous in pronouncing it worthless. Grabu seems to have lost favor during the Revolution but since he furnished music for Waller's *The Maid's Tragedy,* Charlaune is probably right in thinking he remained in England. But he must be considered as lacking any influence on English opera either in the score or in the libretto.

Cambert's opportunity to influence English opera was greater. Arriving in England in 1672, six years later than Grabu, he too was warmly welcomed by the king and was given the superintendency of the music. His operas, which had succeeded so splendidly in France as to arouse the jealousy of Lulli, were given also in England. Two of them, *Pomona* and *Les Plaisirs et les Peines d'Amour,* were presented at Court while *Ariadne* was publicly performed. Ac-

cording to Gildon, it was given in English at the Court in 1672. Giles Jacob says an English translation was given at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden in 1674 by the gentlemen of the Academy of Music, which statement is supported by Langbaine. Of course it is possible that there were both public and private performances. Edwards states that two years after Cambert's arrival, an English version of *Ariadni* (sic) was presented, and adds: "Although he (Cambert) was not the first musician who brought out operas in England, he was the first who produced and directed operatic representations in this country regularly and continuously." This raises the interesting query, What did he direct? Our records show nothing that is continuous in the operatic theatre. Voltaire declares that Cambert's "miserable productions" greatly pleased the English, who lacked musical appreciation. The writer of the article in the *Histoire de la Musique* says to the contrary that Cambert died of a broken heart, caused by disappointment at the failure of his operas. This latter statement seems the true one and has been generally accepted. These French operas were performed without any perceptible influence upon English opera, so that we search in vain for any evidence of indebtedness to French opera.

Meanwhile other operatic music was being rendered in England. February 12, 1667, Pepys attended a musical entertainment which consisted of the singing of one act of an opera as a solo by its composer. Pepys remarks are in his characteristic vein: "By and by with Lord Bruncker by coach to his house, there to hear some Italian musique: and here we met Tom Killigrew, Sir Robert Murray and the Italian Signor Baptista who hath composed a play in Italian for the opera which T. Killigrew do intend to have up; and here he did sing one of the acts. He himself is the poet as well as the musician; which is very much, and did sing the whole from the words without any musique prickt, and played all along upon the harpsicon most admirably, and the composition most excellent. The words I did not understand and so do not know how they are fitted, but be-

lieve very well, and all in the recitative very fine. * * * I confess I was mightily pleased with the music." What came of Killigrew's intention to stage this opera, we do not know for there is no reference to it elsewhere. It seemed to furnish a splendid opportunity for the awakening of interest in foreign opera, but nothing developed from it. When this operatic concert was given, English opera had been going its separate course for more than ten years.

Another record of operatic activity is found in Pepys' account of a nursery for theatres which Killigrew had under consideration. Among other things, Killigrew intended to have four operas to play six weeks at a time. Pepys does not say whether Killigrew intended to bring over Italian singers for the roles, but in view of his decided bias for Italian music, it is not improbable that he did. Shortly before the public performance of *Ariadne* at the Academy, Evelyn, under date of January 5, 1674, mentions that he saw the first Italian opera ever given in England. But as in the case referred to by Pepys the statement is not corroborated by other authorities. These foreign operas with a single exception were presented to the aristocracy, while as we have seen all English operas were open to the public. When we realize that Charles II had been on the throne at least twelve years (taking the earliest possible date for the English performance of *Ariadne*) when the first French opera was given in England, it must be acknowledged that his predilection for French music worked slowly with regard to the transplanting of French operatic ideas. Moreover while Charles was a resident of France there is no record of the performance in France of any French operas.

CHAPTER VI

RESUME

In conclusion it will be of interest to gather a few numerical facts about these operas. Relative to influence it may be said that one opera is taken from the French; nine are directly from the Italian, and two indirectly; six or more are Elizabethan dramas made over; while of the remainder three seem to be of English inspiration. From the French no further influence germinated. Italian influence came with *Arsinoe* in 1705 when the dramatic opera had spent its force. It infused the various characteristics of the Italian opera into the English opera and while its own librettos were practically worthless as literature, it inspired construction of two works of some slight merit among operatic compositions after the Italian manner, *Rosamond* and *Semele.* As to date of presentation, it will be noted that four operas were composed before the Restoration, one between 1660 and 1672, twenty-five from 1672 to 1705, and twelve from 1705 to 1710. Nine drew their subjects from English history, one from Greek and one from Persian history, while at least six owe their sources to Latin authors. In point of authorship, Motteux composed six, Davenant five, Dryden three, Duffet, Durfey, Settle, MacSwiney, two each; seven operas remain anonymous. Davenant, Dryden and Shadwell collaborated on *The Tempest.* All told, there were eleven authors who wrote one play each, making a grand total of thirty-four plays written by eighteen known authors.

The opera cultivated the taste for music to such a degree that many musical numbers were inserted into the legitimate dramas. In this cultivation of a love for music, the English opera had aroused an appreciation for good music which after the death of Purcell could not be satisfied without recourse to the Italians. The result was inevitable.

Genuine Italian opera came into vogue in England and the early English opera disappeared entirely from the stage after 1710 until 1728 when a new species, the ballad opera, made its appearance. It was a medley of songs, some serious, some trivial, all ballad-like and set to music often remarkable for its sweetness and melody.

Among older plays revised in operatic form and presented by the Duke's Company, opera achieved a success which incurred the malice and open attacks of the King's players. This company brought out immediately on the appearance of *The Tempest* and of *Psyche, The Mock Tempest* and *Psyche Debauch'd,* intended as travesties. In this way they hoped to regain the patronage which had temporarily left their houses. So trite were the performances that they soon passed into an oblivion richly deserved. More potent adverse criticism came in the satire of *The Rehearsal* and in the essays of Dennis, Euvremont and others. That these men sharpened their wits to strike this form of drama is itself evidence of its popularity.

Of all the operas that have been mentioned, *King Arthur* alone is acted today and that infrequently. Some of its patriotic airs, however, are yet familiar to the British public. In 1895 *Dido and Aeneas* was revived to be given at the memorial celebration of the bicentennial of the death of Purcell. The operas of Dryden, Davenant and Shadwell and possibly one or two others are familiar to special students inasmuch as their works are fairly accessible. The other extant operas are to be found in the British Museum, although the libraries of our country are the possessors of some rare editions. The operas of Purcell have been printed in the publications of the Purcell Society and Musical Antiquarian Society, but these editions are almost as rare as early copies.

With the exception of the operas of Dryden, Addison and Congreve and in a less degree Davenant, Dennis and Granville, the operas written in verse can hardly by any stretch of the term be called poetry. The prose operas, except as made over from plays, have no artistic merit.

As to the distinctively foreign operas, it seems that two Italian and three French operas were given in England before 1675, but they left absolutely no impress upon the English opera. So far foreign and English opera was maintained side by side, each uninfluenced by the other. From 1675 to 1705 foreign operas disappeared entirely. A few years previous to this last date Italian opera began to exert an unmistakable influence upon English opera. Italians, attracted by the popularity of the solo parts of English operas, came to England to sing in concert. These singers gradually prepared the public for the appreciation of opera in the air and recitative of the Italian fashion. When Italian influence first exerted itself, an opera was rendered, partly in English and partly in Italian. Then Italian librettos were translated in English and English partly rendered into Italian. This unnatural condition of affairs lasted until 1711 when words and music were characterized by genuine Italian spirit. Under the leadership of Handel, Italian opera held sway for the next fifteen years.

APPENDIX

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